

A Message From Fr. Bauer



Those who have experience living on this little planet of ours knows that life has its ups and downs. Sometimes those ups can be quite high, sometimes the downs can be quite low, and sometimes those peaks and valleys come in close proximity, creating an emotional roller coaster of sorts. Last weekend, for example, our parish, along with the Archdiocese, rejoiced and celebrated the Ordination of five men to the Priesthood. We were so excited to see our seminarian, Michael Mehringer, receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders at the cathedral. Scarce was there a dry eye in the house when the new Father Mehringer celebrated his first Mass as a priest here and offered special gifts to his parents at the end of the liturgy. And then, just a few short days later, with much sadness and tears of sorrow, we heard news that the Illinois Attorney General was releasing the full report of their investigation of allegations of clergy sexual abuse in all six dioceses in the state.

While the report was just published, it is an aggregate collation of allegations that stretches back more than 90 years. Sexual abuse, especially of a minor, is an objectively evil act and a terrible sin. And even moreso when committed by clergy. Victim survivors experience pain, trauma, and suffering in many ways. But for more than three decades, the Archdiocese has worked to provide healing, offer various forms of victim assistance, and has implemented serious policies to ensure the safety of children in our churches, schools, and programs. For more information on these, I refer you to the insert from the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth, and also to the official statement from Cardinal Cupich on the attorney general's report. These two documents are intended to provide parishioners and non-parishioners a clearer picture of how the church and the Archdiocese strives to offer healing and protect minors.

Whenever we hear a news story alleging sexual misconduct of a minor by someone who works for the church, our hearts can sink, or tempers can rise. The AG's report had that affect on many people. As is very common in journalism and news reporting in general, because of limited on-air time or finite space in print, editors and reporters are selective in what pieces of a report are discussed, or which soundbites are quoted. As a result, significant details may be omitted, nuances not appreciated, or the perspective may be skewed. The Cardinal's statement identifies and addresses some serious concerns about the report itself – and by extension, what and how it gets reported in the media – which could be misleading. The Cardinal states it is important to "state what we know to be true."

One fundamental truth of the Catholic Church is that it is comprised of sinners. None of us is perfect, and the world we live in is fallen – and every institution and organization composed of humans is subject to sin, selfishness, corruption, and decay. Including the Catholic Church, which has had her share of scandals over two millennia. In times of scandals, trials and tribulations, we look to the head of the Church, Jesus Christ. He suffered much in his Passion and death, and in His Resurrection He conquers the power of sin and death. And this weekend we remember that He sent the Holy Spirit on the Apostles on Pentecost, because of which the Church was able to grow and spread the gospel messages of hope, transformation, and new life. But Jesus even today he still sends the Holy Spirit upon us, not just in the Sacraments of Baptism or Confirmation, but whenever we ask Him to.

Living in a fallen world is challenging enough with all its ups and downs, and when sinful actions cause harm to others and ourselves, we need the gifts of the Holy Spirit to afford us a strengthened sense of hope and faith. No matter what we see, no matter what we've been through, no matter what pitfalls we endure – even the valley of the shadow of death – Christ walks beside us with His rod and staff that give us hope. He desires to heal us and give us peace. He conquers all wickedness and can transform our hearts to be like His, that we may live and love like Him.